



BEING AND STAYING HEALTHY AND HAPPY

In the last two weeks on two occasions I have given myself permission to take time out and rest. Why? Because I was unwell, with a short term ailment, both of which had me flat on my back either in bed or on the sofa. I made a choice to focus on my health and recovery. Ten, twenty, thirty and even forty years ago I would have pushed myself to work, to shop, to cook meals for the family, to clean, to meet or schedule appointments.....I would have put myself dead last on the list of priorities.

Your health and wellbeing are yours to control; and your health outcomes are, ultimately, a direct result of the choices you make and the familial traits that influence the outcome of those choices. Every aspect of your being – physical, mental, emotional and spiritual – requires your equal attention for it is, after all, the combination of these that make you who you are.

Physical – what works for you, works for you.....in other words, you are truly unique so focus on what keeps you in top physical condition, not what works for everyone else out there. Yes, there are generic programs and lifestyle choices that will, for most humans, produce a great physical outcome, but always temper these with side ‘choices’ – a bit like sides you choose when you dine out – that complement the generic program. Listen to your body, and the feedback it gives you, when exercising, playing and sporting. Pain is OK when it’s managed, but pushing yourself to and through your pain threshold will create a ‘stress’ in the body and, when our bodies are under stress, we cannot perform at our peak. Pain is, after all, a sign from the body that something is not right. Work to understand the cause of pain and you will be well on the road to managing your physical health and have a sense of wellbeing way beyond your expectations.

Mental – perhaps the most important of all health and wellbeing aspects – is often times talked about in whispers and behind closed doors. Optimum mental health and wellbeing is, fundamentally, achieved when you know yourself, know the way you think, understand and respect your limitations and strengths, and maintain a diet that ensures optimum nutrition is delivered to the brain. Sound mental health is totally interdependent with robust physical health, for without one you are not likely to achieve the other. Exercise and stimulate your mind by interacting with others; reading something that requires mental effort (a bit like pushups for the brain); challenging your thinking when something said to you ‘does not compute’ i.e. use the analytical capability you were born with to form a judgment and make a choice; testing your sensory capability at every opportunity. Quieten your mind with sleep; relaxation and non-thinking time; meditation; gentle exercise like slow walking; by being in peaceful surroundings at least once a day; by visualization exercises that enable you to daydream and vision outcomes you are seeking. Most importantly, give yourself permission to have

the occasional 'mental health day' off from your normal routine and partake in something that is quietening and relaxing JUST FOR YOU! What relaxes and calms you is what is truly right for you.

Emotional – *your sense of emotional wellbeing will undoubtedly vary from day to day due to the kaleidoscope of interactions and pressures you experience. It's interesting when we think about 'emotional intelligence' in this context, for it is true to say that people with a heightened emotional intelligence and those less selfish in their approach to life, are more likely to maintain a stronger and more sustainable level of emotional health than those who are not. It is our ability to maintain calmness and levelheadedness under increasing pressure, keeping our emotional responses positive and under control, which become indicators of our state of emotional health. Of course there are exceptions to that which should not be overlooked and I wouldn't like to suggest that anyone be self-critical when they are in fact loaded up with too many things to manage and deadlines to meet, and the help they are receiving is not adequate. Anyone is likely to appear disheveled under those circumstances. Emotional health and wellbeing is also very dependent on the health of our relationships with others, the level of maturity that exists, the outcomes of communication and how each person perceives the other. Working to achieve the best possible level of emotional attunement with others in your 'universe' will be one of the best investments you make in sustaining not only a sense of inner emotional wellbeing, but also in helping others to understand you better.*

Spiritual – *in a nutshell your spiritual health and sense of wellbeing come from truly knowing what it is you believe in; when the values you display through your behaviors and words create a sense of soul calmness and peace (i.e. your soul is in sync with your values and not disturbed by your choices); and, understanding and acknowledging that you do not have total control over everything that happens in your life. You can always control **your choices** - actions/inactions, words, reactions – and it is your spiritual attunement to or synchronicity with these choices that will determine how well your soul rests. Always remember that what is good for you may not be for another - one person's belief may be another's torture. By being true to yourself and your beliefs however, with selfless and harmless intent always as the foundation, then spiritual harmony and inner strength will come.*

An important thing to always remember is that all our body's systems are interrelated and designed to work together to achieve and maintain homeostasis. Our bodies adapt, every second and minute of the day, to stressors that present in our lives. These stressors can work for and against us in our efforts to maintain optimum health. It is the body's powerful, adaptive mode that enables the restoration of 'balance' (homeostasis) and the sense of wellbeing we experience. You must therefore trust your body for the powerful force that it is, and know that it will always work to bring you back to optimum health, within the framework defined by your daily choices and genetic influence factors

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